I Like It When You Read To Me by Browneyesparker

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Mike reads to El.

I Like It When You Read To Me

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353 Days: I Love It When You Read To Me

i love it when you read to me and you can read me anything. . .

The first Saturday that Hopper lets him come over to visit El, Mike brings a book to read to her. He read it when he was in the 4th grade and it's still one of his favorites to reread when he's sick in bed with a cold or something, so even though it's really silly, he decides to share *the Boxcar Children* with her.

When he gets to the cabin in the woods, he feels a little shy about it. But she's waiting for him on the porch, pacing back and forth while occasionally pausing to look and see if he was there yet. Her face lights up when she sees him coming up the leafy pathway and she runs down the stairs to meet him halfway.

"Hi!" she says, grabbing his hand, her cheeks are flushed and her smile reaches her eyes.

"Hey," Mike replies, feeling his own cheeks turn pink, he closes his fingers around her's.

"Are you two going to stand outside all day?" Hopper comes out and asks. "Or are you going to come inside?"

"Coming!" El answers. "Come on, we have to go inside."

Mike nods and follows her inside. Hopper locks the door inside them and then settles into a recliner with a newspaper.

"You two can sit on the couch," he tells them.

El and Mike exchange looks and even though he didn't really expect to hang out with the Chief, he figures it's better than not spending time with her at all. So, he sits. A few seconds later, she follows him. They both steal a glance at Hopper and then move closer to each other when they see he's engrossed with the sport's section.

“I brought a book,” Mike tells her, taking his tattered copy of the *Boxcar Children* out of his backpack.

“I like books!” El answers, beaming at him. “I’m learning how to read!”

Mike smiles. “That’s awesome, El!”

“I like it when people read to me though,” El says. “The only person who’s read to me is Hop.”

“I can read to you!” Mike suggests. “Not to brag or anything but I’m sort of a pro because I read to Holly all the time!”

All the time was sort of an exaggeration, he read to her once a week before bed at the most. But it was more like once a month, if he were being honest. His mom read most of the bedtime stories. He was usually just a bystander, although he would never admit to El that most of the nights she had been gone, he would snuggle up with his little sister and listen to Karen read Holly her nightly fairy tale.

“Will you read to *me*?” El asks.

“Yes!” Mike answers. “This is one of my favorites, it’s about a bunch of kids who run off and live in the woods because they’re afraid to live with their grandfather. I can’t tell you too much because I don’t want to give it away, but later on in the other books, they solve mysteries and it’s just a lot of fun.”

El nods and looks at him expectantly. “I’m ready.”

“Oh! Right!” Mike turns to the first page in the book and clears his throat. “Chapter One, the Hungry Children. *One warm night four children stood in front of a bakery. No one knew them. No one knew where they had come from. . .*”

Before either of them realizes it, they’ve made it halfway through the story and Hopper is telling Mike it’s time for him to go home. He promises that it won’t be another three-hundred-and-sixty days before they see each other again.

Mike leaves *The Boxcar Children* with her so she can finish it and

promises that the next time he visits, he'll bring new books for her to read.

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True to his word *(finally)*, Hopper lets Mike come to visit again eight days later.

Mike brings lots more books for her. There's *the Surprise Island*, which is the second book in *the Boxcar Children* series, the first *Nancy Drew* mystery, and a book with a red-headed girl on the cover. El rejects it passionately because it reminds her too much of Max. It isn't until Mike explains it's about a girl named *Anne* who lives in Canada that she agrees to give it a try.

They settle in on the couch again and El spreads the books out on their laps. She contemplates the titles, the illustrations on the covers. She wants to know what happens to the Aldens next but at the same time, she is curious about this Anne person and who Nancy Drew is.

"I can't decide," she tells Mike. "I want to read them all!"

"We have all the time in the world," Mike says. "Whatever I don't read to you, you can read it by yourself. . . if you want to."

Since El is *not* Erica Kane, she doesn't know how to tell him that she likes it when *he* reads to her. She blushes and picks up *Anne of Green Gables*.

"This one," she decides. "Read this one."

Mike's never read *Anne of Green Gables* before but both his mom and sister love the whole series. So, he has a general idea what it's about and it's enough to keep him from wanting to read it. The only reason he brought it along with him is because Nancy told him that El *had* to read it.

But she was looking at him so hopefully. . . he couldn't say no to her. He sits back in the couch and she joins him, turning sideways so she's facing him, crossing her legs Indian style. Mike opens it and starts to read.

“Mrs. Rachel Lynde lived just where the Avonlea main road dipped down into a little hollow, fringed with alders and ladies’ eardrops and traversed by a brook that had its source away back in the woods of the old Cuthbert place. . .”

They go through the first three Anne books at a rapid pace. El is dying to find out what happens between Gilbert Blythe and Anne Shirley. Mike never admits it to anybody, not even her, but he becomes pretty invested in their relationship too and by chapter 41 of *Anne of the Island*, he just knows it *has* to end with them getting together.

They have endured Roy Gardner (a character they both hated with a capital “H”), scarlet fever, and Anne realizing she loved Gilbert when it was almost too late to do anything about it.

He pauses for a second, there’s a few more pages left and then, they’re going to be done.

El tugs on his sleeve. “Is everything okay?” she asks.

“Yeah,” Mike says. “It’s just. . . it’s almost over and I don’t know if I want it to end yet.”

El sighs. “But we need to know if they get together.”

Mike nods and picks the book up. *“I don’t want sunbursts or marble halls. I just want* YOU. *You see I’m quite as shameless as Phil about it. Sunbursts and marble halls may all be very well, but there is more ‘scope for the imagination’ without them. We’ll just be happy, waiting and working for each other. . . and dreaming. Oh dreams will be very sweet now.*

Gilbert drew her close and kissed her. Then they walked home together in the dusk, crowned king and queen in the bridal realm of love, along winding paths fringed with the sweetest flowers that ever bloomed, and over haunted meadows where winds of hope and memory blew.”

They try to read *Anne of Windy Poplars* but they’re thirteen and it doesn’t really hold their interest. So they move on to Nancy Drew and the Hardy Boys.

(But in 1986 and 1988, when PBS airs the first of the *Anne of Green Gables* miniseries, they watch it. El especially likes the actor who plays Gilbert a lot because his dark hair and boyish charm reminds her so much of Mike.)

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El gets better at reading eventually and when she does, she insists it's her turn to read to Mike.

It's summertime now, so sometimes Hopper lets them sit on the porch when the sun is setting. They drink pink lemonade and try to ward off mosquitos while she rereads *Anne of the Island* to him. There are other books too, they read most of the Boxcar Children mysteries, and all of Jane Austen's works.

They take turns reading *Pride & Prejudice* and *Sense & Sensibility* aloud. Passing the book between each other every other chapter.

She stumbles over difficult phrases and sometimes she has to look up words like *mischievous* in the dictionary to find out what it means. It's so cute, Mike wants to die except, he doesn't. Because all he wants to do is listen to her read to him.

The End

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Author's Note:

> I'm BACK! Did anybody miss me? I sure missed writing for these cuties. I fully intended to finish the series "things you said" but when January came, I had no inspiration. Maybe one day I will but right now, I want to write about their 353 days together or whatever it was. I started a list.
> The title of this story came from "The Book Of Love" (covered?) by Peter Gabriel. I tried to fight it but the title and the lyrics stuck with me the whole time I wrote this. And it's just a really awesome song.

I’ll be back soon!

Until Next Time!

Love,

Holly, 11/8/2017